DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 765 CS 206 407

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TITLE We Knew It At the Time: Selected Newspaper Coverage of the Holocaust.
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 26p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (64th, East Lansing, MI, August 8-11, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Content Analysis; History; *International Crimes; *Jews; Journalism; Knowledge Level; *Newspapers; *News Reporting; *Public Opinion; War
IDENTIFIERS *Holocaust; *Nazism; World War II

ABSTRACT

A continuing debate among those studying the Holocaust in Europe during the Nazi era is when Americans first learned of the mass murder of Jews being carried out in the extermination camps. Historians suggest that Americans had been made skeptical of charges of German brutality by World War I "atrocity propaganda," and that the language of many reports did not seriously convey the systematic destruction of six million individuals. However, an increasing body of literature shows that word about what was happening to the Jews was in fact reaching the American public. A content analysis of three major American newspapers, The New York "Times," the St. Louis "Post-Dispatch," and the San Francisco "Chronicle," indicates that Americans should not have been surprised at the horror of the liberated concentration camps. Although only 11 items made the front page, the New York "Times" published an enormous amount of Holocaust material from 1939 to 1943. The "Post-Dispatch" contained repeated warnings, reporters' accounts, and photographs of the Jewish plight during the German invasion of Poland, and a series of articles written by a Berlin correspondent in 1941 left no doubt as to what was occurring in Europe. While the war in the Pacific drew more media attention, much of the same information was available in the San Francisco "Chronicle," indicating that Americans could not help being aware of the Holocaust in progress. (HTH)

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HISTORY DIVISION

WE KNEW IT AT THE TIME: SELECTED NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism annual convention, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich., August, 1981.

One of the ongoing debates among those studying the Holocaust--the systematic destruction of six million European Jews during the Nazi era of 1933-1945--is when Americans first learned of the mass murders being carried out in the extermination camps. Life magazine reacted in shocked horror in 1945 to the conditions being found in the concentration camps being liberated by the advancing Allied armies:

> For twelve years since the Nazis seized power, Americans have heard charges of German brutality. Made skeptical by World War I "atrocity propaganda," many people refused to put much faith in stories about the inhuman Nazi treatment of prisoners.
>
> Last week, Americans could no longer doubt stories of Nazi cruelty.[1]

The New York Times Magazine observed in a similar vein that, "Before our invasion of Germany we had all heard stories of atrocities in German concentration camps and most of us depreciated them as touched up propaganda."[2] Both appear to substantiate the notion that the atrocities uncovered in 1945 were the first confirmation of what had merely been rumor, the facts of which were unknown to the general public. Actually, an increasing body of literature shows that word was reaching the United States as to what was going on in Europe during the Nazi reign of terror.[3] The author, in a related article,[4] pointed out that a content analysis of the New York Times of 1933 showed with

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[1] Life, May 7, 1945, pp. 32-37.

[2] New York Times Magazine, May 6, 1945, p. 8.

[3] Latest additions to this list are Walter Laquer, The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler's Final Solution (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), and Robert W. Ross, So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981). Earlier works explored the view that U.S. policymakers during the 1930s ignored the plight of European Jews until it was too late. See Henry Feingold, The Politics of Rescue (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970); David Wyman, Paper Walls (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968); Saul Friedman, No Haven for the Oppressed (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973); and Arthur D. Morse, While Six Million Died (New York: Random House, 1968).

[4] "Outline of Hitler's 'Final Solution' Apparent by 1933," accepted for publication by Journalism Quarterly, Summer, 1981.

shocking clarity that the outlines of Hitler's "Final Solution" had already taken shape. The Nazi rhetoric threatening "destruction" and "annihilation" of the German Jews began in April, 1933, about seven weeks after Hitler took power and about the time construction began on the first concentration camps.[5]

Dr. Yehuda Bauer, however, maintains that the Holocaust was a totally new experience for its shocked participants and onlookers alike, "literally unbelievable, because it was unexpected and unprecedented." Nobody predicted the outcome:

> . . . all quotations purporting to show that this or that statesman or thinker predicted the Holocaust are taken out of context. Words such as "extinction" or "destruction" were meant to convey images of pogroms, economic destruction, hunger, or forced emigration. They were meant to indicate the untenability of the Jewish position in Europe. They did not indicate a knowledge or a serious prediction of the mass murder of millions of human beings.[6]

Bauer adds that, "Thinking in terms of millions was a way for many people to escape the reality of murder of countless individual human beings, a way in which sanity could be preserved in the midst of unthinkable disaster."[7]

The President's Commission on the Holocaust, in its report to President Jimmy Carter, stressed that there had indeed been a breakdown in the communication process during the war years:

> Failures of communication included the State Department's closing of secured embassy lines to private organizations, thus blocking the transmission of vital information confirming the existence of extermination camps and the plans to exterminate all the Jews. The State and War Departments displayed no recognition of the fact that the Holocaust was distinct from the general German war effort. Eyewitness accounts, reports from informed sources, and oft-repeated Nazi pledges to exterminate the Jews were not integrated, analyzed and internalized to form a basis of action.[8]

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[5] New York Times, April 1, 2 and 8, 1933, and March 21, 1933.

[6] Yehuda Bauer, The Holocaust in Historical Perspective (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), p. 7.

[7] Bauer, p. 25.

[8] Report to the President: President's Commission on the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel, chairman (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 7.

Even accepting the notion that the U.S. government knew what was occurring in Nazi occupied Europe by 1942, what about the American public? Were the mass media carrying reports of the wanton destruction of civilians, especially European Jews? To answer this question, a content analysis of three newspapers from widely separate sections of the country--the New York Times, the award-winning St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and the independently-owned San Francisco Chronicle--was carried out. All three papers, regardless of geographic location, told the story. There should have been no reason for Americans to have been surprised when the concentration camps were finally liberated.

"All the News. . ."

The New York Times lived up to its reputation as the newspaper of record with its reporting of the civilian victims of World War II. From the outbreak of the war on through 1945, the New York Times Index carried extensive listings in as many as fifteen different categories for stories of abuses to civilians and refugees by the Nazis. However, most of the stories, even the most sensational, were buried on inside pages.[9]

The first firm word of the enormity of what was being carried out was reported in November, 1942. "HIMMLER PROGRAM KILLS POLISH JEWS," "Slaughter of 250,000 in Plan to Wipe Out Half in Country This Year Is Reported," was the headline over one story:

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[9]Because of the enormous amount of material listed on the subject in the New York Times Index, items taken from the years 1939-1945 were selected either on the basis of a known event occurring (the fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto during the spring of 1943, for instance) or a telling descriptive summary ("executions," "death," "atrocity," "extermination," etc.) in the Index. Most were located well inside the paper. For 1939, of 27 items selected for analysis, only three were on page one; 1940, two of 32; 1941, two of 24; 1942, none of 36; 1943, two of 42; 1944, two of 35; 1945, none of 21.

> Old persons, children, infants and cripples among the Jewish population of Poland are being shot, killed by various other methods or forced to undergo hardships that inevitably cause death as a means of carrying out an order by Heinrich Himmler, Nazi Gestapo chief, that half the remaining Polish Jews must be exterminated by the end of this year.[10]

The news account, based upon reports from the Polish government-in-exile in London, said the only Jews being spared were "the able-bodied who could provide 'slave labor' for the German war effort." Some, the report declared, were executed in the towns in which they lived, while others, under the guise of resettlement to the east, were shipped by freight cars "to special camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor" where "the mass murder of the Jewish population is taking place." Another story on the same page, datelined Jerusalem, told "methods by which the Germans in Poland are carrying out the slaughter of Jews," and it described "trainloads of adults and children taken to great crematoriums at Oswiencim, near Cracow" where they were killed in "gas chambers in which thousands of Jews have been put to death."

The Germans were making no effort to hide what they were doing. The Times reported a speech by Adolf Hitler to a Nazi party meeting in Munich in February, 1943, in which he warned that Germany would "smash the might of the Jewish world coalition" and that the war would end, not "with the annihilation of the Aryan part of humanity, but with the extinction of Jewry in Europe."[11]

Columnist Anne O'Hare McCormick, writing of a New York rally on behalf

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[10] New York Times, November 25, 1942, p. 10. Yet a third story on the same page reported that Dr. Stephen S. Wise, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, said he had learned through sources confirmed by the State Department that about half of the estimated 4,000,000 Jews in Nazi occupied Europe had been slain in an "extermination campaign." The next day, November 26, 1942, p. 16, a headline reported, "SLAIN POLISH JEWS PUT AT A MILLION," "Mass Electrocutions, Killing by Injection of Air Bubbles Described in Reports." The details in the story were distressingly graphic.

[11] New York Times, February 25, 1943, p. 4.

of Europe's Jews, said, ". . . the Jews are being systematically exterminated in their own countries. . . . There is not the slightest question that the persecution of the Jews has reached its awful climax in a campaign to wipe them out of Europe."[12] In March, 1943, the Times reported that 40,000 persons filled Madison Square Garden to see "We Will Never Die," a "dramatic mass memorial to the 2,000,000 Jews killed in Europe." The production, it was noted, was staged "to stir the Allied nations to stop the slaughter of a people by the Germans."[13]

Details of the fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto were reported as the struggle was going on;[14] by mid-1943, the European Jewish death toll was estimated at over 3,000,000.[15] In 1944, the Times pieced together a tragic review of the Nazi war on Europe's Jews:

> Using anti-Semitism as an instrument of national and foreign policy, Hitler was directly responsible for the destruction of millions of Jews in Germany and in German-occupied countries.
>
> He began by stripping German Jews of their property and civil and economic rights and ended with the physical extermination of more than 3,000,000 men, women and children of the Jewish faith. The majority of German Jews, with the exception of those who had managed to flee abroad before the war, were exterminated after being deported to concentration camps in Poland. Hundreds of thousands of Jews in German occupied portions of Russia were likewise murdered, as were scores of thousands in the Baltic States and Poland.
>
> In Hungary, Rumania and in the Balkans, wherever the Germans held sway, Jews were sacrificed in large masses.[16]

The plight of Hungary's Jewish population, spared up to 1944, was also

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[12] New York Times, March 3, 1943, p. 22.

[13] New York Times, March 10, 1943, p. 12.

[14] See especially New York Times, February 14, 1943, p. 37; March 19, p. 8; and April 23, p. 9.

[15] New York Times, June 13, 1943, p. 8; July 21, p. 13; July 23, p. 11; August 8, p. 11; August 27, p. 7; and August 28, p. 10.

[16] New York Times, May 2, 1944, p. 9.

being reported:

> The first act in a program of mass extermination of Jews in Hungary is over, and 80,000 Jews of the Carpathian provinces have already disappeared. They have been sent to murder camps in Poland.[17]

The newspaper spoke editorially the next day of "the martyrdom of Europe's Jews," and noted that a million Jews in Hungary faced "imprisonment, torture and death" at the hands of a government that was "bent on wiping them out." No Jews, the writer noted, were being permitted to leave Hungary, except for those "being sent into the Nazi slaughterhouses in Poland."[18] The situation was well known in the United States, for leaders of Hungarian-American organizations and churches convened at the Biltmore Hotel "to denounce the extermination campaign directed against the Jews in Hungary."[19]

It was not only occurring in Hungary. The Czechoslovak state council reported 7,000 Czech Jews interned in the fortress of Terzin were "killed en masse" by being "dragged to gas chambers in the notorious German concentration camps at Birkenau and Oswiecim." The account noted that a young Pole who had been imprisoned in both camps brought to London "a confirmation of the existence of these gas chambers and the execution there of uncounted thousands."[20]

New mass executions in Polish concentration camps were announced by the Polish underground in late June, 1944, speeded up, they said, because a Russian offensive threatened to overrun the country:

> The message said that new mass murders were taking place at the Oswiecim concentration camp. They were carried out by gas in the following order: Jews, war prisoners, whatever their nationality, and invalids. A hundred thousand Jews have already been sent to Oswiecim for execution, in addition

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[17] New York Times, May 18, 1944, p. 5.

[18] New York Times, May 19, 1944, p. 18.

[19] New York Times, May 18, 1944, p. 24.

[20] New York Times, June 20, 1944, p. 5.

to the prisoners of war of many nationalities confined there.

Similar mass murders were reported being carried out at other Polish camps, although proof of this is not yet certain. The message closed with an appeal to the civilized world for help.[21]

The underground report was independently confirmed in early July, 1944, by two European relief agencies who published information in Switzerland on the killings at Auschwitz and Birkenau "where more than 1,715,000 Jewish refugees were put to death between April 15, 1942 and April 15, 1944." The news story, complete with a tabular report on the death toll country-by-country, said the victims were "fiendishly done to death."[22]

The Swiss report was publicized, in part, to attempt to avert the slaughter of Jews in Hungary, but it was clear from news accounts printed in the Times that it was already too late. A story from Jerusalem said "the final stage in the tragedy of Hungarian Jews had begun," with 350,000 being rounded up by the Nazis "for deportation to death camps in Poland," and that they were "expected to be put to death by July 24."[23] The threat to the Hungarian Jews was even described to the British House of Commons by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, who spoke of "widespread deportations and massacres," and added that while he did not know the exact number of persons involved, "there can be little doubt in the main of what is going on."[24]

The World Jewish Congress appeared to have accurate figures, for they reported that over 100,000 Hungarian Jews had been gassed in two weeks at Oswiecim, and that from May 15-27, "sixty two railroad cars laden with Jewish

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[21] New York Times, June 25, 1944, p. 5.

[22] New York Times, July 3, 1944, p. 3. A related story, July 6, 1944, p. 6, "TWO DEATH CAMPS PLACES OF HORROR," "German Establishments for Mass Killings of Jews Described by Swiss," carried "incontrovertible confirmation of these facts and figures," and noted that life in the two camps was "living hell."

[23] New York Times, July 2, 1944, p. 12.

[24] New York Times, July 6, 1944, p. 6.

children between the ages of 2 and 8 and six cars laden with Jewish adults" passed daily through a station near Cracow.

> Information received by the World Jewish Congress leaves little doubt that the Germans are waging two wars--one against the enemies of Germany, the other against the Jews--and that, with Germany's defeat imminent, they are preparing to wipe out European Jewry. It is estimated conservatively that they have already massacred 4,000,000 of Europe's 7,000,000 Jews.[25]

Editorially, the Times noted that "it is almost impossible for a civilized mind to grasp the reality of figures given out this week as to the fate of Europe's Jews."[26] Those figures were soon to pale beside those given during the liberation of the Maidanek concentration camp near Lublin, Poland, by the advancing Russians. The army newspaper, Red Star described the camp as being able to hold 400,000 persons "where witnesses and official German records indicated the execution of 'several hundred thousand persons.'"[27]

The Times correspondent, W. H. Lawrence, was shocked at what he saw. He wrote of Lublin as being "the most terrible place on the face of the earth," and said that Maidanek was "a veritable River Rouge for the production of death" where an estimated 1.5 million persons were killed over three years.[28] After inspecting conditions at the camp, Lawrence wrote that he was "prepared to believe any story of German atrocities, no matter how savage, cruel and depraved." He told in graphic detail of how persons were executed by shooting, hanging and gassing.[29]

In November, 1944, the U.S. War Refugee Board made public reports of mass murder being committed at Birkenau and Auschwitz "that transcend the horrors of Lublin," and which "even now continues unabated." The article, while

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[25] New York Times, July 6, 1944, p. 6.

[26] New York Times, July 8, 1944, p. 10.

[27] New York Times, August 11, 1944, p. 17.

[28] New York Times, August 3, 1944, p. 1.

[29] New York Times, August 3, 1944, p. 9.

making it clear that most of the victims singled out for execution were Jews, also used the term "persons" to describe the victims.[30] A subtle change in phrasing, perhaps. But it was enough to prompt the Zionist chairman of the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation, Peter H. Bergson, to denounce the United Nations War Crimes Commission for refusing to consider German atrocities committed against Jews and other minorities as special cases, not part of the overall mass murders against European civilians.[31]

A few months before the War Refugee Board report was issued, the chief rabbi of the British empire, Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, said in a shortwave broadcast beamed from London, "One human family, Jewry, on the continent of Europe, was singled out for annihilation by the fiendish enemy and hardly one-forth of it is likely to have survived."[32] It was a fact which had been amply reported in the New York Times; the information was readily available to national opinion leaders. But how effective were the reports of mass murder, buried day after day on the inside pages? Did it represent an attitude that all this really wasn't important? An example: the end of a story on the convention of the American Federation of Labor noted, "The convention adopted a report denouncing the Nazis for the slaughter of 4,000,000 Jews in death camps." It was buried on page 38.[33]

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

With the outbreak of the war in 1939, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported details of the one-sided battles as the panzer units plunged into Poland and the effect the fighting was having on the thousands of refugees.

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[30] New York Times, November 26, 1944, p. 1.

[31] New York Times, November 26, 1944, p. 24.

[32] New York Times, September 18, 1944, p. 19.

[33] New York Times, December 1, 1944, p. 38.

Entire villages were said to have been destroyed.[34]

Two weeks after the invasion began, the paper warned of the dire consequences that were facing the Jews:

> Polish Jews will be the first to feel the effects of the revolution in Eastern Europe. It is the Jews who own much of the real estate and control much of the business in Poland. Their holdings will be expropriated first of all and most completely of all.
>
> The Jews of Poland have, in fact, already began to feel the full brunt of the Nazi invasion even more violently than other Poles all over the areas now in control of German troops and Gestapo. The German invasion has already destroyed the Jewish property classes by the devastation of much of their property. The Jews themselves have been rounded up and put to work in road gangs and other forced labor schemes.[35]

German occupation, however, soon went beyond "road gangs and other forced labor schemes." Poles were being driven east to permit German resettlement into the conquered Polish Corridor. Jews from all parts of the Reich were reported being transported to "a narrow strip of inhospitable land along the new Russian border" where they were pushed off railroad cars "without adequate food, shelter or medical necessities." As the writer observed:

> Their treatment, one hears reliably, is far worse than anything that American correspondents have dared to cable. The whole story cannot be told because it would expose many to terrible reprisals. As Albert Forster, now governing Pomorze and Pommerellen said: "Every German has a duty to rid the land ruthlessly of all scoundrels, robbers, Poles and Jews. We cannot be severe enough. It would be a mistake to be soft about it."[36]

The Nazis were anything but "soft." Oswald Garrison Villard, in an article reprinted from The Nation,[37] said the resettlement area was "nothing else than a huge concentration camp and charnel house." He documented the movement of nearly a half-million people, most of them Jews, since the previous October and explained,

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[34] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 22, 1939, p. 2A.

[35] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 15, 1939, p. 2A.

[36] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 7, 1940, p. 2D.

[37] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 22, 1940, p. 2C.

> before these people are moved they are to be robbed of all their wealth except 300 marks, and they will not be allowed to take any furniture or any equipment of any kind with them. Into a space 80 by 100 kilometers (50 by 62½ miles) 1,950,000 people are to be jammed, without working capital, without tools or habitations, unable to do business even with the contiguous territories. How they will live until their first crops or how they will till the land without tools or animals is not explained.

Information was coming from other sources as well. A Vatican report in late January, 1940, detailed Nazi attacks on Polish Catholics and condemned German policy as "a real extermination, conceived with diabolical malice and executed with unequaled cruelty,"[38] and an editorial the next day specifically reminded readers that the Jews had suffered as well.[39] The Polish government-in-exile in London reported that at least 18,000 persons had been killed, many of them massacred in public squares, in an effort to "exterminate the Polish populations of the Western provinces."[40] Again, it was noted that the Jews were being "badly treated in particular."[41]

General Hugh S. Johnson, in a syndicated column, asked if there was not some place in the world where the refugees could be resettled. "Poles and Jews are in the process of liquidation," he warned. "If there is nowhere for them to go, there is apparently no end in sight for them but wholesale death."[42] The prophetic message was repeated in early March when the premier of the Polish government-in-exile said that "the Germans are attempting to exterminate the population of western Poland."[43]

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[38] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 29, 1940, p. 1.

[39] St. Louis Post Dispatch, January 30, 1940, p. 2C.

[40] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 1, 1940, p. 1.

[41] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 2, 1940, p. 1.

[42] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 2, 1940, p. 1C.

[43] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 6, 1940, p. 2A.

Even with the successful Nazi conquest of western Europe, the continuing plight of Polish Jews was not ignored, for written reports and even photographs were reaching readers of the Post-Dispatch. In August, 1940, it was reported that all 40,000 Jews in the city of Krakow were ordered to leave for the Government-General, the area of German-occupied Poland not previously annexed to the Reich. Warsaw was to receive the new arrivals,[44] although it clearly would be unable to support them. The city was described as looking like "an untidy brickyard" by Associated Press reporter Alvin J. Steinkopf, who said "there is ruin everywhere." He described the new concrete wall around the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw:

> The Germans say the wall, which is unique in modern times, is not anti-Semitic, but simply a desperate health measure necessary to protect Pole and Jew alike from the pestilences which are likely to follow in the wake of total war.[45]

He described the eight-foot high wall as being "so tight a cat couldn't get through it," and he noted that while Jews were still permitted out, it could easily be closed off, isolating the entire district. Steinkopf said the Germans were concerned about the possibility of typhus breaking out, but six weeks later, the Warsaw ghetto was, without mention of an epidemic, closed off by the wall, which surrounded over 100 city blocks and enclosed 200 streets and even street car lines. As Associated Press reported:

> About 500,000 Jews will begin tomorrow (November 26) a new life behind an eight foot concrete wall built by Germans to enclose the ghetto district of Warsaw, former Polish capital.
>
> All Jews in Warsaw have been required to move into the ghetto, which lies in the central district of the city, and it has become overcrowded, with as many as seven persons living in one room in some buildings.
>
> The Germans built the wall last winter as a health measure, they said. There are 18 entrances--but effective tomorrow all persons who wish to enter or leave must have a special pass.[46]

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[44] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 6, 1940, p. 5A.

[45] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 13, 1940, p. 16A.

[46] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 25, 1940, p. 2.

Not only were the living conditions being reported to readers, but pictures of life in the ghettos of Warsaw, Krakow, Radom and Lublin were printed in the pages of the Post-Dispatch. They showed the stark reality of Warsaw's wall, segregated streetcars in Krakow, and the hungry appearances of Jewish workers and children in Szdlow and Lublin.[47]

The paper ran a series of articles in January, 1941, which left no doubt as to what was occurring in Europe at the time. They were written by Wallace R. Deuel, for six years the Berlin correspondent for the Chicago Daily News-Post-Dispatch foreign service. He said in one article[48] that the world could not really believe what the Nazis were doing.

> A good deal of what has happened in Germany and Europe in the past eight years is incredible to most people because it is so alien to their experience and even to their imagination that they just cannot comprehend it.
>
> This is partly because the world was so disillusioned about propaganda in the last war. The Allies--and the United States--accused the Germans then of committing the most horrible atrocities. People decided afterward that most of the accusations had been false, and they have refused ever since to believe most "atrocity stories" about the Germans.
>
> The Nazis have profited enormously from this skepticism. . . . The result is the Nazis can and do commit atrocities with a measure of immunity from world opinion.

Deuel warned that "Hitler and the men around him will stop at nothing--literally at absolutely nothing--to get what they want," and he used the elimination of Jews as an example:

> Does it seem expedient to the Nazis to exterminate the Jews or Poles? The outside world refused to believe such things could be. It laughed at the vain and pretentious warnings of the preposterous men who could even threaten to do such things--laughed until it was too late.

Another story by Deuel was headlined, "NAZIS ARE USING DISEASE AND STARVATION AND FREEZING TO DESTROY POLISH PEOPLE."[49] He said Nazi policy was to deliberately wipe out the Poles, using starvation and pestilence as weapons.

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[47] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 2, 1941, p. 6C.

[48] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 12, 1941, p. 5A.

[49] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 15, 1941, p. 1C.

> The Nazis have, in fact, developed a new and thorough technique for destroying an entire people--not just the Poles and the Jews, but any and every people the Nazis decide they want to destroy.
>
> The world has had some inkling of how this technique has been applied to the Poles and the Jews. If Germany wins the war, or if the war lasts too long, the world will learn more of this technique--much more.

In a later article, Deuel predicted that if Germany won the war, Europe would be fused into a single socio-political bloc, the Jews being the main ones to suffer:

> Jews will be rounded up, usually with the Nazis' standard half-hour or 45 minutes' notice, loaded into trains and shipped off to concentration camps. Later the survivors will all be sent to whatever "reservation" the Nazis finally decide to set up--all 6,000,000 of Europe's Jews.[50]

Correspondent David M. Nichol sounded a similar theme in a report two months later as he noted that "Any catalogue of the measures against the Jews in recent months alone would fill volumes." He said:

> The fate of Europe's Jews has been obscured in the more general horror of a world at war, but their elimination is proceeding as rapidly and efficiently as before and is an essential part of the expansion of the "new order."[51]

The blueprint was there; the Holocaust had begun. All the Nazis needed, in addition to the massacres, cold, hunger and pestilence, was the mechanism of mass extermination. When that was developed, the readers of the Post-Dispatch knew without having to read between the lines. Portions of an Office of War Information pamphlet were printed, detailing Nazi efforts to subjugate the Poles in Warsaw, especially the Jews: "Reports from Europe indicate that German authorities are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe."[52]

Readers were made aware of the desperate fighting in Warsaw during March and April, 1943, as the Nazis sought to obliterate the Ghetto and its population, and they were aware when it ended:

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[50] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 21, 1941, p. 1B.

[51] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 26, 1941, p. 1C.

[52] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 14, 1943, p. 2.

> The secret Polish radio appealed for help last night in a broadcast from Poland and then suddenly went dead. The broadcast as heard here: "The last 35,000 Jews in the Ghetto at Warsaw have been condemned to execution. Warsaw is echoing to the sound of musketry volleys. The people are murdered. Women and children defend themselves with their naked arms. Save US. . . .[53]

Portions of a National Council of Churches report were printed, detailing the mass murder which was going on. "The suffering of the Jewish people in Europe is beyond anything the civilized imagination can picture," the account began, and it estimated the death toll was at least two million. It told of residents of the Warsaw Ghetto being forcibly removed to waiting trains:

> The trains were dispatched to what the reports described as "extermination camps." It is reported that on arrival in camp the survivors were stripped naked and killed by various means, including poison gas and electrocution. The dead were interred in mass graves dug by machinery.[54]

For readers of the Post-Dispatch, the awful reality of Hitler's "Final Solution" became apparent after the first tanks rolled across the Polish frontier, for it was reported in all its grim detail.

San Francisco Chronicle

Much of the same information was available to readers of the San Francisco Chronicle, even though the war in the Pacific would draw more of a focus of attention than would the European conflict. Even before the war began, a story on Germany noted, "Nazis have slandered the Jews, bled them, beat them, squeezed them, imprisoned them," and it went on to relate the various rights taken away from German Jews.[55] After the German invasion of Poland began, readers were warned not to trust wartime propaganda, for there were reports of killings and tortures coming in from both sides.[56] An edit-

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[53] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 22, 1943, p. 9A

[54] St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 2, 1943, p. 2C.

[55] San Francisco Chronicle, July 16, 1939, "This World," p. 7.

[56] San Francisco Chronicle, September 5, 1939, p. 6; "This World," September 16.

orial cartoon depicted the United States swimming in a sea of propaganda leaflets with the admonition, "We must keep our head above the water."[57] But at the end of October, Chronicle readers got a foretaste of what was to come with a report published by the British government on the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald. It was

> . . . an indictment accusing the Nazis of inflicting tortures almost beyond the imagination of Torquemada himself.
>
> In accordance with diplomatic useage, the document was called a White Paper, but if it is even partly true it should have been called a "black book," for it contains one of the darkest chapters of what is called modern civilization.
>
> It is a documented story of atrocities visited upon both Jew and Gentile in Germany before the war started September 10.[58]

A companion story warned in ironic understatement, "Germany's Jews may be headed for trouble again,"[59] and noted the Nazi government had launched a campaign blaming Jews for starting the war. The mass movements of populations was described for Chronicle readers. Jews were being moved from Vienna to Lublin, southeast of Warsaw, and the paper noted that the refugees were permitted to take only 110 pounds of luggage and $120 in cash. The writer pointed out that if they were unable to find work there, they would starve.[60]

The year 1940 opened on an ominous note, Adolf Hitler's New Year's Day speech, where he warned, "The Jewish capitalistic world will not survive the twentieth century."[61] The Chronicle, like other papers, detailed the mass movements of populations in Poland and the mistreatment of all Poles, Jews and Catholics alike.[62] But correspondent W. L. White in Berlin noted

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[57] San Francisco Chronicle, September 6, 1939, editorial page.

[58] San Francisco Chronicle, October 31, 1939, p. 1.

[59] San Francisco Chronicle, October 31, 1939, p. 2.

[60] San Francisco Chronicle, November 1, 1939, p. 5.

[61] San Francisco Chronicle, January 1, 1940, p. 1.

[62] San Francisco Chronicle, January 5, 1940, p. 8; January 6, p. 12; January 7, p. 12; January 23, pp. 1, 5; February 9, p. 5; February 25, p. 33; March 8, p. 6; March 16, p. 3; March 28, pp. 4, 6; April 3, p. 2; April 13, p. 2.

that there were difficulties in getting the story out of Europe:

> Instead of writing, "The Nazi policy of Jew persecution is now being extended to Bohemia with that savage brutality to which Germans have long been calloused," I think I should say, "The policy of new Germany toward Jewish minorities is being continued in Bohemia with unflagging zeal and unswerving determination."
>
> They aren't ashamed of their Jewish policies. If you use the wrong adjectives, they're liable to come and reason with you.[63]

By late 1940, the Chronicle was reporting measures being taken against Jews in Rumania, Hungary, Holland and France.[64] In France, it was noted that Jews were being singled out for special treatment at the concentration camp at Gurs:

> In view of the anti-Jewish movement making headway in unoccupied France, no one would predict if and when the Jews would be released. One group of Jewish women released from the Gurs camp were again taken into custody immediately after their arrival in Marseilles and held in "restricted residence."[65]

In December, it was reported that 12,000 refugees in the Gurs camp, "including 6,000 Jews uprooted on one hour's notice from their German homes" were facing starvation.[66] From Poland, details of the ghetto wall in Warsaw were being reported.[67]

During early 1941, one had to be somewhat skilled in reading between the lines, for the average person would probably skip over the tiny articles buried at the bottom of the page. Later in the year, more atrocity stories began appearing, however. A Russian report claimed the Germans tortured, raped and killed hundreds of civilians in Lwow while moving into Poland,[68]

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[63] San Francisco Chronicle, January 12, 1940, p. 3.

[64] San Francisco Chronicle, July 3, 1940, p. 2; July 4, p. 2; July 5, p. 2; July 7, p. 2; August 1, p. 2; August 7, p. 2; September 9, p. 2; October 2, p. 2; October 4, p. 2; October 6, p. 2.

[65] San Francisco Chronicle, October 14, 1940, p. 2.

[66] San Francisco Chronicle, December 27, 1940, p. 2.

[67] San Francisco Chronicle, November 26, 1940, p. 1.

[68] San Francisco Chronicle, August 9, 1941, p. 3.

and executed numerous others in the other occupied countries of Europe.[69] One headline declared, "Hitler's Hangmen Have Reportedly Slaughtered 100,000 Hostages in Occupied Countries."[70]

While the interest in early 1942 was on the Pacific war, the paper noted that the Nazis were planning "the biggest prison the world has ever seen" for the Jews in eastern Poland. There, "enclosed by barbed wire. . . the Jews will be severed from any communication with the rest of the world," in line with the German goal to "realize the ultimate aim of the Nazi anti-Jewish policy, namely, of ridding Europe of the last Jew."[71] Just how that was to be accomplished ran under the headline, "Nazis Reported to Have Slaughtered 86,000 Jews,"[72] reporting executions near Minsk. The victims, many of them just deported from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, were buried in ditches.

By late 1942, the Allied campaign in North Africa, the fighting on the Russian front and the American offensive in the Pacific dominated news coverage. News of Nazi harassment, deportation and execution of Jews was often found in roundup stories, although few bore headlines and could still be easily overlooked. Initial reports of deportations in July and August were vague, but by December, sufficient information was appearing to give readers more than a suggestion of what was occurring. If there were any doubts, columnist Chester Rowell reassured readers "Tale of Slaughter of Jews Entirely Credible," as he began his analysis:

> The terrific story of Jewish extermination, given out by the Polish government-in-exile and confirmed from other sources by Rabbi Wise, might simply be dismissed as unbelievable war propaganda if it referred to any-

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[69] San Francisco Chronicle, July 1, 1941, p. 3; August 10, p. 2; August 23, p. 1; October 4, p. 1; October 18, p. 2; October 23, editorial page; November 11, p. 2; November 16, p. 2; November 18, p. 4; December 14, p. 10.

[70] San Francisco Chronicle, November 20, 1941, p. 4.

[71] San Francisco Chronicle, February 18, 1942, p. 3.

[72] San Francisco Chronicle, March 17, 1942, p. 3.

> body but Hitler. But in his case it is logical, consistent and, to his fanatic obsession, quite the natural thing to do. He has, in fact, been doing it already on a huge scale, both directly and indirectly. The newest story merely indicates that he thinks his own time is short and that he must get the job done quickly. Besides, it is quite within his sense of proportion to slaughter a couple of million Jews as a votive offering to himself, just before he blows his own brains out. He would at least go down in history with what he imagines will be the eternal glory of having bequeathed to it a Jewless Europe.[73]

On one occasion, when it was reported that tens of thousands of Polish Jews had been killed, the Chronicle carried a condemnation of the Nazis by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill:

> The systematic cruelties to which the Jewish people, men, women and children, have been exposed under the Nazi regime are among the most terrible events of history and have placed an indelible stain upon all who perpetrate and instigate them.[74]

A reader noted, "It is reliably estimated that the Nazis have already massacred a million-and-a-half Jews. As many will perish from the sytematic programs of annihilation being ruthlessly pursued."[75] The Women's International Zionist Organization declared that the Nazis had exterminated more than two million Jews in "central houses for mass slaughter," and that "a war of extermination is proceeding relentlessly" and that "the remaining Jews in occupied Europe will be wiped out unless the free world speaks."[76]

The same continued on into 1943. One article summarized country-by-country a "comprehensive dossier" offered by the Inter-Allied Information Committee "covering Germany's persecution of Europe's Jews." It ended with a

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[73] San Francisco Chronicle, November 27, 1942, editorial page. Also during this period, stories of deportations began frequently appearing: July 25, p. 2; July 27, p. 2; August 1, p. 2; August 2, p. 2; August 6, p. 3; August 16, p. 1; August 28, p. 2; August 30, p. 2; September 3, p. 3; September 5, p. 2; September 25, p. 2; December 10, p. 2.

[74] San Francisco Chronicle, October 31, 1942, p. 2.

[75] San Francisco Chronicle, November 11, 1942, editorial page.

[76] San Francisco Chronicle, December 12, 1942, p. 2. Similar warnings were being reported from other sources: July 6, p. 3; September 25, p. 2; October 5, p. 2; November 26, p. 4; December 11, p. 6.

note that Jews in London had recently held a memorial for those killed by the Nazis, and quoted the chief rabbi of the British Empire: "The indifference which a portion of the British press and some government circles display toward this most appalling massacre in history is amazing."[77]

If readers did not analyze the stories, it seemed that headlines could not be ignored: "Entire Nations in Europe May Be Erased,"[78] "Hitler: 3,000,000 and Humanity: 0,"[79] and, "A Design for Massacre--The Nazis Regiment Murder."[80] Likewise, the fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto was known at the time it was occurring; on one occasion information was drawn from a magazine article written by German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels:

> The Germans are again making their most appalling of threats--to exterminate completely the Jewish race in Europe, a project they are believed to have undertaken already in Poland where pitched battles reportedly have been raging in the Warsaw Ghetto. . . .
>
> He reminds his readers of Hitler's gruesome prediction in September, 1939, that the Jewish race and not the Aryan would be confronted with extermination if the Jews "unleashed" a second World War.
>
> This forecast, said Goebbels, will be fulfilled with unerring decision and compulsion.[81]

During the balance of the year, headlines and news stories detailed a grisly tale of mass murder. In November, the Chronicle reported on the "Nazi

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[77] San Francisco Chronicle, January 3, 1943, "This World," p. 9.

[78] San Francisco Chronicle, January 19, 1943, p. 2.

[79] San Francisco Chronicle, February 28, 1943, p. 8.

[80] San Francisco Chronicle, March 8, 1943, p. 2. Similar telling headlines appeared over news stories on the following dates: March 21, p. 2; March 28, p. 8; March 29, p. 7; April 3, editorial page; April 6, p. 3; April 18, p. 6; April 26, p. 4; May 11, p. 5; May 22, p. 2; June 30, p. 2.

[81] San Francisco Chronicle, May 9, 1943. Other references to the Warsaw Ghetto fighting include: April 25, "This Week," p. 9; May 7, p. 2; May 22, p. 2; June 3, editorial page; and June 4, p. 2.

Horror at Kiev!" "There Were 60,000 Jews in the City--Now There are Six; The Rest Were Shot or Buried Alive, Their Bodies Burned." It was the story of the 1941 slaughter which took place at the ravine of Babi Yar:

> Sixty thousand Jews of all ages and both sexes were taken to the ravine. Their belongings were confiscated, their clothes were ripped off. They were lined up at the edge of the ravine, machine-gunned and thrown to the bottom.
>
> Some were buried alive, mothers with their children, aged persons, the infirm. It took three days to kill them all. Sporadic executions followed until the Germans fled.[82]

It is apparent that by 1943, readers of the San Francisco Chronicle had been made aware of the fate of Europe's Jews. As columnist Dorothy Thompson would write a year later, after the liberation of the concentration camp at Lublin, Poland, "The revelations made by American correspondents visiting the Lublin extermination camp in Poland are but confirmations of what we have known for months." The first-hand accounts, she said, were more moving than any statistical description of the persecution of European Jews. She called the Nazi terror "the most cold blooded mass murder in human history."

She blamed the world's indifference to the mass murders on the large scale of the war itself, which made possible a breakdown in the social order. "Every individual bears a responsibility for the whole of mankind," she observed. "Human civilization is based on the recognition of that responsibility. The moment anyone denies this responsibility, he makes himself an accomplice to humanity's crimes."[83]

Zygielbojm's Protest

In late 1942, when the full impact of the enormity of the Holocaust

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[82] San Francisco Chronicle, November 29, 1943, p. 4. Other atrocity stories appeared: July 27, p. 2; September 13, p. 1; September 21, p. 12; October 2, p. 3; October 3, pp. 4, 5; October 8, p. 4; October 29, p. 2; and November 30, p. 2.

[83] San Francisco Chronicle, September 4, 1944, p. 12.

began to reach the outside world, leaders of the Polish National Council in London reacted with shock. One delegate, Socialist Szamul Zygielbojm, remarked in a broken voice, "There is nothing I can say except to hope the Germans will be defeated before they can kill all my people."[84] His frustration came from the fact that since June, 1942, he had been one of those most active in attempting to let the world know what the Nazis were doing to the Jews of occupied Europe. His appeals fell on deaf ears, however,[85] and by the following year he was dead from an overdose of sleeping pills.

His wife and child had been among the victims; friends who mourned him noted that at least he had been spared having to hear the news of the final extermination of the heroic fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto. Further attention might not have been paid to Zygielbojm's life had it not been for a letter he left behind addressed to the president and the premier of the Polish government-in-exile. Reprinted in the New York Times,[86] it shows his acute distress over world inaction:

> The responsibility for the crime of murdering all the Jewish population in Poland falls in the first instance on the perpetrators, but indirectly also it weighs on the whole of humanity, the peoples and governments of the Allied States, which so far have made no effort toward a concrete action for the purpose of curtailing this crime. By passive observations of this murder of defenseless millions and the maltreatment of children and women, the men of those countries have become accomplices of criminals.
>
> I have also to state that although the Polish Government has in a high degree contributed to stirring the opinion of the world, yet it did so insufficiently, for it did nothing extraordinary enough to correspond to the magnitude of the drama now being enacted in Poland.

Zygielbojm hoped his death would serve a symbolic purpose:

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[84] New York Times, November 28, 1942, p. 7.

[85] Yehuda Bauer, "When Did They Know?" Midstream, April, 1968, pp. 52-53, 56.

[86] New York Times, June 4, 1943, p. 7.

> By my death I wish to express my strongest protest against the inactivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of Jewish people. I know how little human life is worth, especially today. But as I was unable to do anything during my life, perhaps by my death I shall contribute to destroying the indifference of those who are able and should act in order to save now, maybe at the last moment, this handful of Polish Jews who are still alive from certain annihilation.

In September, 1944, Rabbi Baruch Koroff of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, sent General Dwight Eisenhower a telegram asking that the Army take steps to prevent the ultimate annihilation of civilian internees in seventeen concentration camps. Eisenhower's reply six weeks later, appears to show that the indifference Szamul Zygielbojm wrote about had not really changed. The New York Times carried Eisenhower's reply:

> "The conditions described in your message are well known to me," General Eisenhower cabled. "German authorities have been repeatedly and explicitly warned by radio and leaflets against committing atrocities on prisoners or civilian deportees and told that the guilty would be brought to justice. Further warnings will be issued as the situation warrants."[88]

Periodically during the war, gigantic rallies were held in New York to protest Nazi treatment of the Jews and call for world action against the Germans. Organizers for one, a 1943 youth rally scheduled for Madison Square Garden, placed an advertisment in the New York Times:

> . . . we read in the newspapers and hear over the radio about a whole people--an ancient people which gave the world its fundamental principles of justice--being put to death with the most gruesome treatments by the Nazis. But we do not read and we do not hear that anything real is being done to stop this wholesale slaughter of the Jewish people in Europe or to save its remnants--men, women and children who are going through the most incredible tortures, and yet bear it with great endurance, courage and dignity.[88]

It does not appear to be the fault of American newspapers that six million European Jews, along with five million other civilians, were method-

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[87] New York Times, November 3, 1944, p. 12.

[88] New York Times, May 12, 1943, p. 21.

ically slaughtered by the Nazis. The word was getting out in graphic fashion, although it was often buried in inside pages. But despite the messages being transmitted from a number of sources, governmental decision makers were not, for whatever reasons, forced by public opinion to take any action. This was one of the tragedies of the Holocaust--a lesson that must not be forgotten lest it occur again.

In recent times, European neo-fascists and segments of the American far right have questioned the authenticity of the Holocaust--their arguments say that most Jews escaped and that the actual death toll was "only" 100,000; "the myth of the six million" is Zionist-communist propaganda. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was a Holocaust, and newspaper readers in New York, St. Louis and San Francisco and all over America knew it at the time.